CLARK COUNTY ENDANGERED SPECIES PROGRAM
newsletter
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Salmon Savers: Gary Wade

Quote: *"When it comes to salmon recovery, it's pretty easy to point a finger at everyone else. When people learn that I'm involved in salmon recovery, they frequently tell me who or what's responsible for the problem. I wish the problems we face were that simple to identify and solve."*

Occupation: As Habitat Program Coordinator with the Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board, Gary oversees habitat projects that the board has funded—68 since 1998, with another 18 projects proposed for funding this year. He's a "salmon techie" who studies what fish need in various watersheds, compiling and analyzing data that is used for restoration work.

Gary is also a member of Clark County's ESA Advisory Committee, which will review county ordinances in early 2003 to gauge their effectiveness at protecting and restoring salmon.

Thoughts on salmon recovery: Gary feels that most people are interested in salmon recovery and want to have fish around for their kids and grandkids. But that gets tested when it comes down to specifics about costs, or what they might have to give up. Additionally, concerns about national security and the economy tend to push salmon issues to the back burner.

Other challenges to salmon recovery include getting everyone to agree on what the major limiting factors are. Gary believes success is unlikely without a systematic long-term effort. But he also finds reasons for optimism and cites the many dedicated volunteers who have raised awareness of the need for salmon recovery. "People might not listen to government, but they certainly listen to their neighbor," says Gary. "Fish First and the Lower Columbia Fish Enhancement Group, for example, have increased awareness of what can be done on stream systems and have involved a lot of people in salmon recovery."

Accomplishment he's most proud of: Gary recently completed a major study to determine what factors limit the ability of habitat to fully sustain populations of salmon in watersheds in the lower Columbia region. His limiting factors analysis took two years to research and write, resulting in four 200-page reports. The major limiting factors he identified include lack of large woody debris in streams; poor riparian conditions; high water temperatures; low water flows that limit rearing habitat; destructively heavy peak flows; and disconnected floodplain habitat. Many local conservation groups use Gary's documents to guide their own restoration strategies.

Surprising fact about Gary: Gary used to build houses and worked as a general contractor. At age 40, he quit his job to go back to school. Four years later he got a degree in environmental sciences with an emphasis in stream ecology. ⌘

Ecology accepting public comments on new water quality standards

The state Ecology Department is overhauling and strengthening the state's water quality standards for the first time in a decade. The standards limit pollution in Washington's lakes, rivers, and marine waters with the goal of protecting people, fish, animals, and drinking water. They also form the basis for wastewater permits and water cleanup plans.

The proposed new standards were designed to reflect the latest science and incorporate new state and federal requirements. For example, they now require colder temperatures in rivers and streams that are home to bull trout. (Previously, they have been concerned only with proper temperatures for salmon, which can tolerate slightly warmer water.)

Eight public hearings have been scheduled around the state, including one in Vancouver on February 6 at the Water Resources Center, 4600 SE Columbia Way. The workshop starts at 6 p.m. and the public hearing starts at 8 p.m. ⌘

Salmon spawning site conserved

On the north shore of the Columbia River near Interstate 205 lies a pristine stretch of shoreline whose waters literally come alive with chum salmon at this time of year. The fish are visible by the hundreds, creating something of a commotion as they swim and thrash in shallow waters. Chum have been returning to this spot to spawn for thousands of years. Historically, the spot served as a fishing site for Native Americans.

The site is known as Wood's Landing, homesite of the Erskine B. Wood family. Last August, several members of the Wood family generously donated a conservation easement to Columbia Land Trust on a 2.1-acre portion of the 7-acre project. The city of Vancouver, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Columbia Land Trust have joined in partnership with the Wood family to provide long--term stewardship for this critical habitat.

There's lots of chum in them thar waters!
The banner salmon runs of 2002 also apply to the last group of fish to show. Lower Columbia wild chum have returned in huge numbers, with the final tally between 30,000 and 40,000 fish, said WDFW biologist Joe Hymer. That's about three times as many fish as in the 2001 run, which made managers happy, since 2001's return was the largest since 1955. *[Excerpted from NW Fishletter]*

The gravel bed at the river's edge is bathed by springs from the adjacent hillside, keeping the area moist and cool for the developing eggs even when river levels fluctuate. In addition to aiding aquifer recharge, trees and native plants provide cover and shade for the spawning salmon. ⌘

Power Planning Council proposes less water for salmon

The Northwest Power Planning Council is proposing to reduce the amount of water dedicated to helping young salmon migrate to the Pacific Ocean in spring. The council was established by Congress in 1980 to balance power production with fish and wildlife protection in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Montana.

Council Chair Larry Cassidy, a Vancouver resident, said "We have to drive this program based on the best available science." Cassidy acknowledged that "it's pretty clear" that spilling water is the best route for juvenile salmon migrating to the ocean. At the same time, however, he also noted that there remains scientific uncertainty about the benefits of flow management to salmon survival.

Environmental groups believe the council's proposal potentially boosts power production at the expense of imperiled salmon. ⌘

Racing toward 4(d) compliance – ESA Program update

Under the Endangered Species Act, a jurisdiction such as Clark County has the potential to be sued by those who think it's not doing enough to protect fish as well as by those who think it's doing *too much* to protect fish. But if Clark County successfully convinces the National Marine Fisheries Service that our operations and ordinances comply with section 4(d) of the ESA, then the county will be considered ESA-compliant and will not be liable under the ESA for third-party lawsuits, and neither will citizens who follow county ordinances.

No county in Washington has yet to achieve 4(d) compliance, but Clark County is ahead of most. A big milestone took place in November, when the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) agreed to the process by which we are evaluating all our ordinances for ESA compliance. This is a first in Washington state. Here are other milestones:

❏ *Environmental baselines* – We are studying three major watersheds—the East Fork Lewis River, Salmon Creek, and Lacamas Creek—to assess their current environmental health. In January, we will then analyze this information alongside county ordinances to gauge the potential impact of our ordinances on these watersheds. We're also interested in determining if our ordinances can help degraded habitat recover from disturbances such as those caused by development.

❏ *Recovery planning* – The Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board's salmon recovery plan for the lower Columbia region is targeted for completion in spring of 2004. We've been actively involved in the scope and details of the plan. As NMFS accepts the plan as ESA-compliant, then the counties will receive corresponding legal protections as they implement it.

Flipping out at Lucia Falls
Photo taken on January 3, 2003 by Noel Johnson of www.lewisriver.com

❏ *Watershed approach for responding to environmental issues* – We've hired a consultant to develop a template for analyzing watershed processes. This will be finished in early spring. The template will help us identify environmental issues in each watershed and sub-watershed, and evaluate the range of programs and regulations available to address them. ⌘

Klamath fish die-off blamed on water diversion

California state biologists say diversion of Klamath River water to Klamath Project farmers bears much of the brunt for last September's massive salmon die-off in the lower Klamath River. In a report released on January 3, the California Department of Fish and Game concluded that low river flows impeded fish passage and drove fish together, causing disease outbreaks that killed the fish. Under the federal government's 10-year operations plan for the Klamath Project, it is not known whether a repeat of the fish die-off is likely again next fall.

Of the 33,000 fish that died, it's estimated that 70 percent of these were wild fish and about 30 percent were from hatcheries. Ninety-five percent were fall chinook salmon, and most of the others were steelhead and coho. The die-off represents about 30 percent of the total fishery. ⌘

The value of floodplains

As buildable lands become scarce, the pressure to develop in floodplains increases. Building homes and businesses in floodplains not only puts people in harm's way, but it reduces the many environmental benefits of floodplains. These include:

❏ *Natural flood and erosion control.* Floodplains serve as a natural sponge, storing and slowly releasing floodwaters. This reduces the height of a flood and the velocity of the river, enabling it to carry floodwaters downstream. Floodplains also reduce sedimentation.

❏ *Water quality maintenance.* As water courses through the floodplain, plants serve as natural filters, trapping sediments and capturing pollutants. They also help to moderate temperature fluctuations.

❏ *Ground Water Recharge.* Floodplains promote infiltration and recharge of the aquifer. They slowly release water to reduce frequency and duration of low surface flows.

❏ *Fish and wildlife habitat.* Floodplains maintain biodiversity by helping plants and animals migrate to new and existing habitat. They provide breeding and feeding grounds, create and enhance waterfowl habitat, and protect habitat for rare and endangered species. During floods, many aquatic species, including salmon, find refuge in the slower waters of floodplains. ⌘

Calendar Highlights

Jan. 23, 8am – 4:30pm, Project Learning Tree – Solid Waste Module AND Worms Go To School, Vancouver. Tim Lichen, (360)546-9510; lichen@vancouver.wsu.edu.

Jan. 24, 25, 30 & 31, Columbia Watershed Salmon & the Endangered Species Act, Portland. Call (503)725-5117 or e-mail bolson@irn.pdx.edu

Jan. 25-March 8 (Saturdays, 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.), Clark County Wildlife Stewards. Call Clark Public Utilities at (360) 992-8585.

Jan. 25, Feb. 8 & 22, March 8 & 22, April 12& 19, May 17, June 7 & 21, 8:45 a.m. to 1 p.m. Clark County Tree Planting. Call Clark Public Utilities at (360) 992-8510

Jan. 25, Friends of Trees tree planting, Cascade Highlands, Vancouver. Call Erika at (360)260-9140.

Monster fish…

A Grants Pass fly-fisherman caught a 71-pound 8-ounce chinook salmon on a fly rod on the lower Rogue River in October, capping an extraordinary year that yielded so many huge fish that, in the words of a Gold Beach guide, "It had to be at least 50 pounds for anyone to even notice."

Feb. 5, March 5, April 2, May 7, June 4, ESA Advisory Committee Meeting, Vancouver. Contact John Tyler at (360)397-2232 or john.tyler@clark.wa.gov.

Feb. 6, 8am-4:30pm, NatureMapping-I , Vancouver. Call Tim Lichen, (360)546-9510; lichen@vancouver.wsu.edu.

Feb. 12 – April 16, Wednesdays, 6:30 p.m., Watershed Stewards Training, Clark County. Contact Gary Bock at (360) 397-6060 ext. 7703 or gary.bock@clark.wa.gov.

Feb. 20, 8am-4:30pm, Good Bugs Go To School Gardens, Vancouver. Call Tim Lichen, (360)546-9510; lichen@vancouver.wsu.edu.

Feb. 28, March 1, 6, & 7, Watershed Law, Policy, & Process, Portland. Contact: (503) 725-5117 or e-mail bolson@irn.pdx.edu.

Mar. 6, 9am-330pm, Clean Air Academy, Vancouver. Call Tim Lichen, (360)546-9510; lichen@vancouver.wsu.edu.

March 20, May 15, 4-8:30pm, Worms Go to School, Vancouver. Call Tim Lichen, (360)546-9510; lichen@vancouver.wsu.edu.

April 25 & 26, May 1 & 2, Watershed Strategic Planning, Social Change, & Action, Portland. Contact: (503) 725-5117 or e-mail bolson@irn.pdx.edu

May 15, Sammy Awards 2003, Vancouver. Contact Don Strick at 397-6012, ext. 8 or don.strick@clark.wa.gov.

Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board
For meeting information, contact the LCFRB at (360)425-1555 or visit www.LCFRB.gen.wa.us.